



# Heidelberg | Harvard – Explorer Seed Fund

## Call for Proposals

As part of the institutional partnership between Heidelberg University and Harvard University, and supported by the State of Baden-Württemberg through its Global Partnership in Science program, Heidelberg University is launching the Heidelberg | Harvard Explorer Seed Fund for the funding period **April 1, 2026 – December 31, 2027**. This program supports transatlantic collaboration with Harvard University by funding outstanding research and cooperative activities through joint projects.

Through targeted measures to intensify partnership activities, the fund provides new impetus for collaborative projects. The focus is on individual research stays by Harvard University researchers at Heidelberg University as well as academic events, targeting both leading and early-career researchers. The program aims to further strengthen the international excellence of both institutions.

### 1. OBJECTIVES AND MEASURES

The Explorer Seed Fund aims to support individual or multiple researchers and event formats to achieve the following goals:

- Promote innovative research collaborations across all disciplines
- Strengthen the partnership and enhance international visibility through joint projects, publications, and innovative learning and teaching models
- Integrate Harvard University researchers into Heidelberg research networks
- Raise third-party funding based on supported activities
- Ensure sustainability of the cooperation through continuation, follow-up projects, and long-term utilization of results

Eligible measures include:

- Funding of research stays by Harvard University researchers at Heidelberg University
- Funding of academic events (e.g., workshops, lectures, summer schools) to foster networking and visibility

### 2. FUNDING SCOPE

The fund supports research stays by Harvard University scholars at Heidelberg University for periods of **1 to 21 months**, as well as joint research projects and shorter-term measures.

**Eligible funding categories for individual or multiple researchers within a single application, aligned with the standards of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (AvH), include a maximum of €100,000:**

- Monthly fellowships for researchers from Harvard University:
  - Doctoral researchers € 1.400
  - Early-career researchers € 3.000\* (PhD recently completed)

- Senior researchers € 3.600\* (Post-Docs, Senior Researchers)
- Increase of individual rate for fellows is possible through additional funds of receiving institute
- Fellowships for researchers are free of income tax
- Travel allowances (round trip):
  - For stays of 1-12 months: € 1.350 per fellow
  - For stays of 13-21 months: € 2.100 per fellow
- Monthly health insurance allowance € 250 (information on health insurance during your stay in Germany is available through the DAAD and AvH)
- Family support:
  - Child allowance equivalent: €255 per month per child
  - Monthly allowance of €130 for each accompanying partner and child upon proof of private health insurance coverage

\*As of January 27, 2026: Rates have been adjusted in line with the updated funding rates of the AvH Foundation.

**Eligible material and project costs within a single application may include a maximum of €20,000:**

- Organization of academic events such as workshops, lectures, and summer schools
- Travel and accommodation for short-term collaboration activities for fellows and guests
- Employment of research or student assistants
- Laboratory supplies and consumables
- Preparation of external grant applications
- Publication costs
- Technical equipment

### **3. APPLICATION**

#### **3.1 ELIGIBILITY**

Applications are open to:

- Faculties, institutes, and central academic units of Heidelberg University.

The application must be formally submitted by a project-leading researcher (Principal Investigators: professors, group leaders, habilitated researchers) of Heidelberg University. However, the project may be jointly led by PI's from both institutions.

***Information for Harvard PIs:** Applications are invited from individuals who hold a faculty appointment at any Harvard school and who have principal investigator (PI) rights at that school. Harvard medical School (HMS) applicants must hold an HMS appointment with PI rights, and have grants managed in one of HMS's basic or social science departments. Those who hold a faculty appointment at a Harvard-affiliated hospital may serve as a member of a project team, and may be funded for this participation at Heidelberg's discretion, but may not serve as the Harvard lead applicant on project proposals.*

#### **3.2 APPLICATION DOCUMENTS**

**Applications must be submitted as a single PDF file and include the following documents:**

- Proposal form
- Project description (max. 5 pages) outlining:
  - The research or networking project
  - Research question and methodology
  - Roles of the collaborating partners in research, including integration measures for visiting Harvard scholars within Heidelberg's academic environment
  - Detailed project timeline and implementation plan
  - Expected results and long-term perspectives
  - Contribution to the sustainable partnership between Heidelberg and Harvard
  - Planned public outputs (e.g., publications, workshops, conferences)
- Budget plan
- Letter of support from the respective Heidelberg faculty

- Letter of support from Harvard University, Office of the Vice Provost for International Affairs
- Profiles of nominated fellows of Harvard University, including:
  - Research focus and teaching experience
  - Key academic achievements and publication list
  - Curriculum vitae
  - Letters of intent from proposed collaboration participants and all nominated fellows of Harvard University

### 3.3 APPLICATION PROCEDURE AND DEADLINE

Applications must be submitted **in English** by the Heidelberg University PI as a **single PDF file via email to:**

[harvard-cooperation@uni-heidelberg.de](mailto:harvard-cooperation@uni-heidelberg.de)

**Application deadline: February 28, 2026**

Applications are open immediately. Given the current maximum project duration of 21 months, two calls for proposals are planned. The first call closes on February 28, 2026. The second call is expected to open in Q2 2026. Additional rounds may be launched depending on available funds and project outcomes.

### 4. SELECTION PROCESS

Applications will be evaluated by a selection committee at Heidelberg University, which includes the Research and Strategy Committee (FoSKom), the Vice-Rector Teaching and Learning, representatives from Harvard University, and is chaired by the Vice-Rector International Affairs and Diversity. Final funding decisions are made by the Rectorate.

Selection criteria include:

- Qualification and complementarity of partners
- Academic potential of the collaboration
- Contribution to sustainability of the partnership
- Support for early-career researchers, equality, and diversity

### 5. APPLICATION TEMPLATES

- Proposal form
- Budget plan

### 6. KEY INFORMATIONS

- **Value-added tax (VAT):** 50% of the fellowship (excluding travel and allowances) is subject to 19% VAT. This must be considered in the budget.
- **Complete applications only:** Only fully completed applications will be considered for funding.
- **Funding approval:** Funding is subject to the availability and the amount of resources provided by the State of Baden-Württemberg.

**CONTACT:** Heidelberg University – International Relations Division – Heidelberg | Harvard – Cooperation [harvard-cooperation@uni-heidelberg.de](mailto:harvard-cooperation@uni-heidelberg.de)

Prof. Dr. Marc-Philippe Weller  
Vice-Rector International Affairs and Diversity

Dr. Alexander Au

## 7. FAQ

### 1. HEIDELBERG | HARVARD COOPERATION

- Heidelberg University and Harvard University signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2025 to further institutionalize their long-standing collaboration. The State of Baden-Württemberg supports the partnership via the Global Partnership in Science program. The goal is to create a structured foundation for current and future projects and position the partnership as a model for transatlantic cooperation.

### 2. WHO CAN APPLY?

- Established researchers of Heidelberg University leading a cooperation with Harvard University partners. Doctoral researchers are not eligible.

### 3. WHAT ARE THE FELLOWSHIP AMOUNTS?

- Doctoral researchers: € 1.400 based on DAAD research fellowships.
- Early-career researchers: € 3.000\*
- Senior researchers: € 3.600\*
- Increase of individual rate for fellows is possible through additional funds of receiving institute
- Fellowships for researchers are free of income tax

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### 4. CAN VISITING SCHOLARS ALSO BE INVOLVED IN TEACHING ACTIVITIES DURING THEIR STAY?

- Yes. Research stays funded under this program may include teaching activities such as guest lectures, seminars, or contributions to courses. If teaching is planned as part of the stay and involves a teaching obligation, the administrative and legal framework of the respective university applies to those engaged in teaching. This applies independently at Heidelberg University and at Harvard University.

### 5. HOW ARE TRAVEL ALLOWANCES DETERMINED?

- Travel allowances of € 1.350 (1–12 months) and € 2.100 (13–21 months) are calculated according to the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation's [table](#) for research fellow travel.

### 6. WHO QUALIFIES FOR FAMILY BENEFITS?

- Child benefit replacement: EU, EEA, and Swiss nationals may claim child benefit under German law. Others can apply for the program's replacement payment.
- Health insurance allowance: € 250/month per accompanying partner and child, upon proof of full private health insurance coverage.
- Partner allowances are only granted if the partner has no independent income.

### 7. IS THERE HOUSING AVAILABLE FOR RESEARCHERS FROM HARVARD UNIVERSITY?

- Heidelberg University provides one to four room apartments for visiting researchers in its guesthouses on the campus "Im Neuenheimer Feld". The units are modern, fully equipped and offered at rates well below the usual housing market in Heidelberg, with costs to be paid by the researchers. A selection of apartments can be made available to Harvard researchers. Availability depends on current occupancy and units can be offered as long as accommodations remain open. More information on guesthouses can be found [here](#).

### 8. WHO IS CONSIDERED AS AN EARLY-CAREER RESEARCHER?

- Graduates and young researchers within five years of completing their doctorate (excl. recognized interruption periods, e.g., parental leave).

### 9. CAN DOCTORAL RESEARCHERS EARN A PHD AT HEIDELBERG UNDER THIS PROGRAM?

- No, the program funds temporary research stays only; it does not support doctoral degrees at Heidelberg.

### 10. SHOULD EXACT TRAVEL DATES BE INCLUDED IN THE APPLICATION?

- Not required, but the planned duration must be specified for budget purposes.

**11. WHAT IS THE FUNDING PERIOD?**

- April, 1 2026 – December 31, 2027

**12. IS THE SCHEDULE BINDING? CAN CHANGES BE MADE?**

- Changes may occur during the project. All schedule adjustments affecting allocated funds must be communicated to the International Relations Division and are subject to approval.

**13. HOW SHOULD THE BUDGET PLAN BE STRUCTURED?**

- Use the program's budget template and detail costs by category.

**14. WHEN IS THE APPLICATION PERIOD?**

- Applications are open immediately. Two rounds are currently planned: first round closes 28 February 2026, second round in Q2 2026.

**15. HOW SHOULD APPLICANTS ENSURE COMPLIANCE WITH RELEVANT REQUIREMENTS IN THEIR APPLICATION?**

- For all applications compliance with the respective Export Control Regulations are required. More information can be found [here](#).

**16. WHAT ARE THE SELECTION CRITERIA?**

- Qualification and complementarity of partners: How well do the expertise and strengths of Heidelberg and Harvard participants complement each other? Are relevant prior work and resources contributed by both sides?
- Academic potential of the collaboration: How original and promising is the research question? Is there clear potential for follow-up projects?
- Contribution to sustainability of the partnership: How likely is the collaboration to continue beyond the Strategic Partnership Grant?
- Support for early-career researchers, equality, and diversity: Are junior researchers actively involved? Are diversity aspects (e.g., gender, origin, discipline) considered and promoted?

**17. WHAT HAPPENS IF THE APPLICATION IS APPROVED?**

- Funding amount or period may be adjusted; approved projects require a final report.

**18. HOW IS THE PROJECT IMPLEMENTED?**

- Approved projects receive a funding notice. Funds are administered by the host institution.

**19. HOW ARE INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY QUESTIONS ADDRESSED IN THE COLLABORATIONS?**

- Intellectual property matters, in particular those arising in connection with third-party funding applications, joint research projects and publications, can be resolved as needed following a positive funding decision in a separate agreement after consultation with the Harvard Office or Technology Development and the Research Department of Heidelberg University.

**20. WHO IS CONSIDERED A PROJECT ASSISTANT?**

- A project assistant may be designated in the application and, if the project is approved, will manage project administration tasks (e.g., adjusting budgets, requesting funds, preparing expenditure reports). The project assistant can also be appointed after approval.

**21. HOW THE FELLOWSHIP IS PAID OUT**

- Requests for issuance of the fellowship must be submitted by the project leader to the Office of Research (Dept. 6.2) at least six weeks before the stay begins. More information on third-party funded fellowships at Heidelberg University is available [here](#).
- Payment of the fellowship, travel allowance, and other allowances must be arranged and signed by the project leader together with the fellowship and approval notice, then forwarded to the Finance Department (Section 4.3).

**22. WHAT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED IN THE BUDGET FOR FELLOWSHIPS?**

- 50% of the fellowship (excluding travel and allowances) is subject to 19% VAT.

**23. WHICH INSURANCES ARE MANDATORY FOR HARVARD RESEARCHERS?**

- Recognized German health insurance is required.
- Private liability insurance is recommended.

- Costs must be covered by fellowship funds.
- Social insurance contributions are generally not required.

#### **24. WHERE DO HARVARD RESEARCHERS GET ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT?**

- Experienced and early-career researchers: [Welcome Centre](#)
- Doctoral researchers: [Graduate Academy](#)
- All researchers must register with their respective unit.

#### **25. CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS**

- Questions can be directed to the International Relations Division at [harvard-cooperation@uni-heidelberg.de](mailto:harvard-cooperation@uni-heidelberg.de)
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